



# Canadian Professional Pet Stylists

## EARS AND GROOMING



Courtesy of the  
Professional Pet Groomers Assoc. of Manitoba

### OTITIS EXTERNA

**Otitis Externa is defined as inflammation of the external ear canal.**

Occasionally after grooming some pets seem to 'develop' ear infections. Some pets will excessively rub or scratch at their ears and/or shake their heads. The pets that commonly exhibit these symptoms are the ones that came into the grooming shop with early signs of Otitis Externa or pets that are predisposed to overgrowth of bacteria or yeast in their ear canals.

During the grooming procedure, your pet's ears were thoroughly cleaned out and, for breeds that require it, any hairs plucked from the ear canal. Some irritation from plucking the ear hair out or cleaning the ears may occur; perpetuating the onset of a bacterial overgrowth and/or leading to the 'itch and scratch' cycle.

It is very important that you not allow your pet to excessively scratch or rub at his/her ears, as this will cause damage to the sensitive skin of the outer ear canal. Also beware of allowing the dogs to dig their nails into the ear canal to scratch and damage the sensitive ear canal.

### PRIMARY CAUSES OF OTITIS EXTERNA

- Parasites – such as ear mites, mange or ticks
- Allergies – which is the most common cause of otitis externa in dogs. Allergies include: contact allergies, flea allergy dermatitis and atopy, the allergic disease caused by pollens and molds, or food allergy (most common of the allergies!)
- Foreign Bodies – such as plant material or seeds (stickers from grasses or weeds like fox tails)
- Other Dermatologic disease – any dermatologic disease that affects the ear flaps can lead to inflammation in the external ear canal. Auto-immune diseases can cause severe scaling, crusting, and ulceration of the pinna (ear flaps) and external ear canal. Glandular disorders and viral diseases.
- High levels of yeast or bacteria.



Bathing does not cause ear infections in dogs.

## **SOME PREDISPOSING CAUSES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTITIS EXTERNA**

- Length and conformation of the ear canal.
- A lack of significant opening into the canal, which may reduce air circulation
- Heat and humidity will tend to make the ear canal suitable for bacteria and yeast growth
- Frequent swimming may increase moisture in ear canals and facilitate the growth of bacteria and yeast “swimmers ear”.

## **YOUR PROFESSIONAL PET STYLIST**

Most Professional Pet Stylists try very hard not to drench the ear canals with water during the bath, and take care to dry the ears after the bath to the best of their ability. Boric acid based cleaners are used along with absorbent cotton pads, as well as drying the inner ear flap with a dryer.

But the bottom line is ..... **WATER DOES NOT CAUSE EAR INFECTIONS!**

## **REGULAR CLEANING**

Regular cleaning of the ear canal is an important and necessary part of regular grooming to remove excess debris and ear wax. There are many safe and easy to use products on the market that you may buy through your local pet store or veterinary clinic.

As dog owners you should be inspecting your dog's ears weekly to make sure they are healthy and clean. It is important to regularly handle the dogs ears so you become familiar with how the ear canals look and smell thereby making it easier to notice an irregularity. Regular ear examinations also help to train the dog to accept ear exams as a part of life. This way if an ear infection does happen, it will be easier to treat and not as traumatic for the pet.

If your dogs ears are excessively red, dirty, smelly, painful or if the dog is scratching at their ears or rubbing them, or twitching and shaking their head, you should contact your veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.

